

want to leave off the table is that we also need to reduce our military spending. I'm fully in favor of supporting our veterans. I believe this is an important, worthwhile investment for their health, their education and for their welfare, but there are a number of military armaments and machines that we simply don't need. We don't need to depend on a nuclear arsenal, in my view. We need to engage in international agreements to cut the nuclear weaponry arsenal and inventory in the world.

□ 1030

We need to make sure that we begin to shut down some of these bases we have all across the country—as many as 174 bases. Do we need this kind of military footprint? I don't think so.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that tomorrow we're going to have a group of leading economists at 11 o'clock to come together and offer their views about the proper direction for prosperity for America. Tomorrow the Congressional Progressive Caucus at 11 a.m. will convene, and we'll have a number of great economists whom we invite everybody to come listen to, including Jeffrey Sachs. I've run out of time, Mr. Speaker, but I urge people to attend tomorrow The Way Forward for America.

DEBTOR NATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. TERRY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. TERRY. "It is the debtor that is ruined by hard times." That was said by our 19th President, Rutherford B. Hayes. It is a timely and insightful comment.

The United States now is the debtor. We are \$15 trillion in debt, rising at a yearly clip of \$1.5 trillion with really no institutional control to stop that.

Yes, we're in hard times—9 percent-plus unemployment for 3 years straight. A report the other day said the real unemployment rate from those that have just given up is probably closer to 15 percent—16 million to 20 million Americans. Our savings, decreasing, mostly because of the dollars that are going towards buying bonds or selling bonds to China.

Now, before us this week, though, is probably one of the most important votes that this Congress will take this year, and that is to pass an amendment to our Constitution forcing this body to balance its budget. Now I know it's stunning to many people that our Constitution didn't have that. There were lots of fail-safes built into our Constitution, and I think that our Founding Fathers never thought that deficit spending other than at a time of war would ever occur in our country, but it has, and it's become the norm.

Why has it become the norm in Congress? Simply answered, because you can. There's nothing to stop it. The easiest way, the most political way so

you never have to say "no" is to deficit spend. My friends, that has to end. It has to end this congressional session.

Now, the balanced budget amendment is a simple one. It says, basically, we cannot spend more than our revenues. That's what most State constitutions have, that's what the Nebraska constitution has, and that's what the city charter for Omaha has. I spent 8 years on the Omaha city council. We had to have a balanced budget. You have to make tough decisions. I've been there when people have come and said, we need new water parks or we need something else. We on the city council, because we had to live by a balanced budget, had to make a decision of raising taxes, cutting somewhere else, or saying "no." Those are your only three options.

Well the time has come that Congress needs the institutional barriers to spending, and it's the balanced budget amendment. It will be the institutionalized discipline that has been lacking here for decades. The time has come to pass it.

I want to leave this one general point, both disappointing and hopeful. There was an article in USA Today, November 4 or so, 11, 12 days ago, where it quoted the Democratic leadership saying to their own people, kill the balanced budget amendment. They want to preserve the right to deficit spend our future away at \$1.5 trillion per year. Fortunately, as we have heard from one Democratic Member, he's not following the Democratic leadership's orders here. I hope that we will get enough of our Democratic friends who believe in fiscal discipline to join us. It takes two-thirds of both the House and the Senate to do that. It will be a close vote. So on something as simple as saying that our expenditures can't exceed our revenues, I ask for all of my colleagues' support.

TRUTH-TELLING ABOUT THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN: A FIREABLE OFFENSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, sometimes it seems like the surest way to get in the most trouble is to tell the truth about the war in Afghanistan. Witness the case of Major General Peter Fuller, whom Congressman WALTER JONES just talked about. General Fuller was one of our troop commanders in Afghanistan until he decided to speak his mind. After President Karzai made the outrageous statement that he would back Pakistan in a war against the United States, Major General Fuller delivered a colorful and candid on-the-record reply. He said, "Why don't you just poke me in the eye with a needle?" He said this of President Karzai, whom he also described as erratic and "isolated from reality."

He added that the Afghan Government doesn't properly appreciate the enormous sacrifices Americans are making on Afghanistan's behalf, especially at a time when we have major economic challenges right here at home.

And what was Major General Fuller's reward for telling it like it is? What did he get for expressing the frustration so many Americans feel? He was thrown immediately under the bus. He was fired, relieved of his command by General John Allen, who admonished General Fuller for "inappropriate public comments." An interesting choice of words: "inappropriate public comments."

As Time magazine pointed out, the implication there seems pretty clear: What Major General Fuller had the audacity to say out loud—that the Karzai regime is feckless and corrupt—is what most people secretly believe. Time correspondent Mark Thompson put it this way: "It is not a good sign when what everyone is saying privately cannot be stated publicly. In that case, only the troops—the ones dying—and the taxpayers—the people employing both Allen and Fuller—are kept willfully in the dark." The writer Christopher Hitchens put it even more bluntly, saying that to silence Fuller "is to establish a stupid culture of denial in the ranks."

Throughout this decade, Mr. Speaker, this decade that we've been at war, the failure of our government to level with us has been a persistent problem.

□ 1040

Whether it's the phony weapons of mass destruction in Iraq or prisoner abuse and torture or just the refusal to let soldiers' coffins be photographed—that was during the Bush administration—over and over again the American people have been fed a steady diet of misleading spin and outright lies. But the people who are paying for this war in blood and treasure deserve much better. They are tired of propaganda. They are owed an honest accounting of what's going on, what obstacles we face, and what kind of progress we're making—or not making.

Major General Fuller had enough respect for the American people to tell them the truth. By refusing to dish out the same phony platitudes, he may have lost his job, but he maintained his integrity. If the continued rationale for this war is built on a lie that no one must expose, then surely that's a sign that this mission is beyond repair.

The real solution is not to cover up everything that's going horribly wrong in Afghanistan. The solution is to recapture our integrity as a nation and end this war once and for all, not in 2014, not at some uncertain date in the future—now. It's time now to bring our troops home.

APPROVING KEYSTONE PIPELINE WILL CREATE JOBS AND BOOST AMERICAN ENERGY INDEPENDENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, President Obama has been going around the country saying that he is taking action through Executive order because “we can’t wait” on the Congress. However, he has just said that he is going to put the largest job-creating project in America on ice.

When it comes to creating jobs and providing additional resources for energy, the President can wait. In fact, he’s putting the Keystone pipeline off until after the 2012 election. That is nonsense and hypocritical.

This pipeline will not only create tens of thousands of jobs, it will also help to dramatically reduce our dependence on oil from despotic Middle Eastern petrostates. By blocking and delaying this important project, the Obama administration is standing squarely in the way of economic growth and energy independence.

It’s time to get serious about approving this pipeline. It has broad support, and its builders have demonstrated a strong willingness to do what it takes to reduce potential environmental impact, even going so far as to propose changing its route.

Mr. Speaker, this project makes sense for our economy and for our national security and energy independence. It’s long past time the Obama administration stopped blocking its progress, because the American people can’t wait on this issue.

But the President again seems oblivious to the fact that we have a real unemployment rate of approximately 26 million people. I want to read some information put out by the Republican Conference this morning.

“According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of Americans who are either unemployed, underemployed, or not searching because they’ve been discouraged by the job market has reached 26 million people. In October, nearly 14 million workers were unemployed, with an additional 8.9 million working part time because they could not find full-time work. There were also 2.5 million workers who were available for work but had stopped actively searching because of the economic conditions. All told, over 16 percent of the U.S. workforce is now unemployed or underemployed.” And yet the President won’t make a decision on the Keystone pipeline that would create tens of thousands of jobs.

Republicans, though, have taken action. We have over 20 bills sitting in the Senate, introduced by Republicans but passed by a bipartisan House majority, and these will all create jobs in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the American people to go to jobs.gov and click

on “track legislation” for them to see the evidence of what Republicans are promoting in the House of Representatives that is being stopped in the Senate. Yes, there is a do-nothing part of the Congress, Mr. Obama, but that is in the Senate, which is controlled by the Democrats.

So again, I want to urge Americans to go to jobs.gov and click on “track legislation.” Republicans have the will to help create jobs in this country through empowering small businesses and reducing government barriers to job creation, fixing the Tax Code, boosting competitiveness, encouraging entrepreneurship, maximizing American energy production, and paying down America’s unsustainable debt burden and starting to live within our means.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members are reminded to address their remarks to the Chair.

HONORING OUR NATION'S VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, this past Friday was Veterans Day, the day we set aside to honor and remember the service of our Nation’s veterans. I know that most of my colleagues attended veterans events throughout their districts. I was proud to be at the American Freedom Festival, honoring our veterans, at a jobs fair and a mega-concert at George Mason University.

Although Veterans Day originally honored those who fought in World War I, in 1954 it was expanded to include the remembrance of all veterans. And, indeed, every veteran deserves such honor. They all chose to risk their lives to protect us. They bravely answered the call of their Nation. But, sadly, too many died in defense of our freedom. Of course, such noble service would not be possible without the unwavering support of their families.

America is safer because of our veterans, from those who served overseas to those stationed here at home. We properly award medals for individual heroic actions, but it is their daily dedication, courage, and valor that makes each and every one of them an American hero.

There are more than 21 million veterans in the United States—73,000 in my district, the 11th District of Virginia, alone. We celebrate their commitment and their sacrifice, from the Revolutionary War to the Iraq war.

But our remembrance must not end simply by honoring their past service. Upon leaving the military, many veterans face significant challenges here at home. Although more must be done, the issue of providing care to our wounded veterans has been well documented. I was pleased to join many of my colleagues to support the largest

single increase of funding for the Veterans Administration in history.

However, there is a growing crisis among our veterans. And I want to call attention to the troubling unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans, which, at 12.4 percent, is one-third higher than the national average. And as the troops currently stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan begin coming home, it will only get worse.

These are America’s heroes, men and women who risk their lives to protect our families. Congress repeatedly comes together in a bipartisan fashion to support our troops overseas. Ensuring that our troops have the equipment and personnel they need to accomplish their mission has been a priority, but it can’t be the only priority. It is long past time that we show the same commitment to our veterans when they come home.

More than one in nine veterans who left the service in the past decade is currently unemployed. Jobs have to be our top priority. We’ve got to move beyond lip service. If we really want to help our veterans, hire them.

The President’s American Jobs Act recognizes the overarching need to create jobs. Our economy cannot fully recover while so many Americans are unable to find work. The American Jobs Act provides incentives for companies, large and small, to hire additional workers, and it cuts taxes on every working American in order to further spur economic demand.

Most importantly, the American Jobs Act provides additional incentives to companies when they hire veterans. The Returning Heroes Tax Credit cuts taxes for businesses that hire unemployed veterans. The Wounded Warriors Tax Credit offers even greater tax cuts to businesses who hire unemployed veterans with service-connected disabilities. These dedicated men and women aren’t looking for a handout; they’re looking for an opportunity. And the Senate has already acted on a number of these proposals by the President.

I call on my colleagues to remember that recognizing and honoring the sacrifices of our veterans doesn’t stop when they leave the service. They need jobs, and they need them now.

□ 1050

THE NATIONAL RIGHT-TO-CARRY RECIPROCITY ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. NUNNELEE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. NUNNELEE. Mr. Speaker, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. The Second Amendment is one of the cornerstones of our liberty. That’s why this morning I rise in support of H.R. 822, the National Right-to-Carry Reciprocity Act.

In Mississippi, approximately 45,000 people have concealed carry permits.